

## Book Review: Diamondfield — Finding the Real Jack Davis

Ernest A. Hoidal

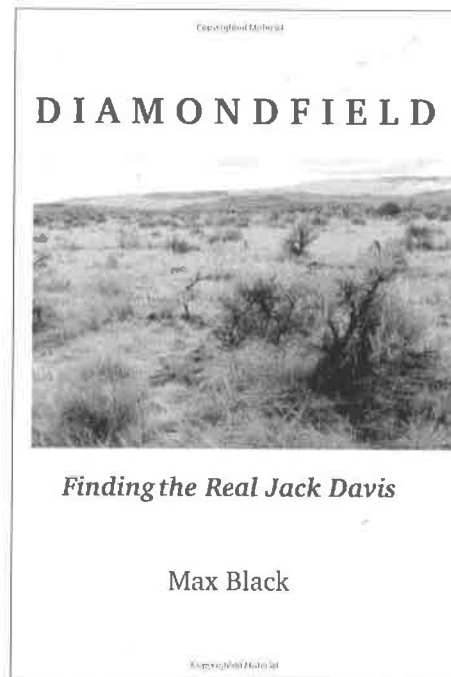
**A**s a former insurance agent and Idaho State Legislator, Max Black embarked on a journey to discover the truth.

Was Jackson Lee Davis, who was known as “Diamondfield Jack” (the discovery of quartz crystals near Silver City gave him this moniker [they did not turn out to be diamonds]), correctly convicted for the murder of two sheep herders in Cassia County? Jack was hired by the Sparks-Hadrell Cattle Company as an “enforcer” to prevent sheep from encroaching on cattle grazing areas which led to the alleged shooting deaths of Daniel Cummins and John Wilson in February of 1896 in Cassia County near Rogerson.

Mr. Black’s survey of the sheep camp, as well as his research of court records, weaves a fascinating rest of the story of Diamondfield Jack. Criminal procedure is a focus of the book with James H. Hawley’s heroic efforts on Diamondfield Jack’s be-



Diamondfield Jack in Nevada, circa 1904.



half to save him from hanging.

Mr. Black’s metal detector exposed a missing bullet slug not discovered prior to trial. The distances traveled by Diamondfield Jack on horseback, prior to and following the shootings, did not add up to a conviction but nevertheless, a jury was convinced that Jack killed the two sheep men. Not only was Mr. Hawley able to remove Diamondfield Jack from the hangman’s noose, but he convinced Governor Frank Hunt to pardon Jack’s convictions.

Following his pardon, Diamondfield Jack located to Goldfield, Nevada and became a successful mine owner and operator with a not so private partner. There is even a bit of romantic intrigue from Mr. Black’s connection with “Diamond Tooth Lil” who ran a house of ill repute in Boise.

This is a fine addition to “The Sagebrush Lawyer,” a book written by John MacLane which extols the legal exploits of James H. Hawley at the turn of the twentieth century.



Diamondfield Jack had a romantic interest in Diamond Lil, a well-known madam in frontier towns including Boise.

Criminal procedure is a focus of the book with James H. Hawley’s heroic efforts on Diamondfield Jack’s behalf to save him from hanging.

You will find this read a most interesting part of Idaho legal history. Enjoy.

### About the Author

Ernest A Hoidal has been a member of the ILHS for the last five years and was chair of the Oral History Committee prior to assuming the position of president which he now holds.

